

Chairs - Cabinet

DRAWER 29A

FURNITURE

71.2007 285 610000

Curios and Relics

Furniture

Chairs

Cabinet

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

1100 OHIO DRIVE SW.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO:

October 27, 1971

Mr. Bert Sheldon
3314 Wisconsin Ave., N.E. #302
Washington, D. C. 20016

Dear Mr. Sheldon:

I am sending you some information that Mr. Robert Marshall, Curator of this office, has developed regarding the dozen side chairs supplied by Joseph Meeks for the Lincoln Cabinet Room in the White House and being of the design illustrated in an advertisement of the July 1967, issue of Antiques Magazine. I regret to state that his research to date has disclosed no documentation that would verify this attribution. Mr. Marshall has discussed this with the Registrar (Curator's Office) of the White House and have reviewed their existing records pertaining to four side chairs remaining from a set attributed to J. and J. W. Meeks and used in Lincoln's Cabinet Room.

These chairs predate the Lincoln era having been acquired for the White House during the Administration of President James Polk. They are of the Gothic Revival style seen in America during the second quarter of the Nineteenth Century. The chairs are rather classical in line but are embellished with such Gothic elements as trefoil cutouts in the crest rail and pointed arches in the back.

For further information regarding the firm of Joseph Meeks and Sons, I refer you to articles in Antiques Magazine, April 1964, entitled, "The Meeks family of cabinetmakers" and July 1966, entitled, "More on the Meeks cabinetmakers." In addition, Mr. Marshall has prepared an outline of the cabinetmaking firm drawn from the above sources as well as other publications acknowledged in his footnotes. He is also enclosing a photograph of one of the side chairs in the White House which served in Lincoln's Cabinet Room.

I trust that this information will aid in your research. With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Elmer S. Atkins
Assistant Director
White House Liaison

Enclosure

Joseph Meeks and Sons

Joseph Meeks and Sons (originally listed in the directory as Joseph and Edward) (1797-1868), New York, New York. This important firm, in existence for seventy-one years, had a "Manufactory of Cabinet Furniture" at 43 and 45 Broad Street.¹ The firm was founded by the forceful Joseph Meeks (1771-1868) who was in business as a cabinetmaker with his brother Edward as early as 1797, when they were first listed in the New York City directory.²

Joseph Meeks was the prime force in the development of the long-lived Meeks firm. By 1800, according to the directories, he had set up his own business, separate from that of Edward Meeks, his partner in 1797. Under his direction and that of his sons and grandson this firm continued until 1868.³ (The Meeks partnership discovered by Celia Jackson Otto and reported by her was that of Joseph Meeks and Stats Mead who were mentioned in Broad Street in 1820; Stats Mead, cabinetmaker, was listed at 2 Coenties Slip and later at 85 and 87 Broad Street in the New York City directories from 1820 to 1847-8).

The chief of Meeks firm was Joseph, his sons J. and J.W. and his grandson, John.⁴ In 1833, Endicott and Swett printed a color lithograph illustrating over forty pieces of furniture which they were ready to supply upon order. This print represents the first American publication of complete designs for furniture, formerly shown only in details in cabinetmakers' price books.⁵ Each item was numbered, described and priced. The furniture was not cheap, one bed with draperies costing \$600. Meeks stated... "Our establishment being one of the oldest and now the largest in the United States, we are able to execute orders, at wholesale prices, to any amount and at the shortest notice." The word "wholesale" is significant. Hitherto, all authenticated Meeks furniture has borne the New York label, but recently a label was found on a small buffet in Louisiana which reads, "J. and J.W. Meeks, Cabinet Makers 43 and 45 Broad Street, New York City and 23 Charters Street, New Orleans.

In 1833, Joseph Meeks and Sons launched a definite new American style in a handsome colored advertisement. Twenty-two pieces, including all tables, two chairs, sideboards, a cheval mirror, two-door wardrobes, and secretaries, show restauration influence. A few show the influence of George Smith, especially in the vase foot; the others - well-designed and practical - seem to be simple adaptations of Empire types; number 39 is an original version of the Turquoise settee. The advertisement indicates an important, progressive cabinetmaking establishment.⁷

With an ever-increasing prosperity, Joseph Meeks and his sons brought land all over the city, reaching peak values of \$78,000 in 1851, \$33,000 in 1852, \$64,000 in 1853, and \$65,000 in 1854 as recorded in the New York City Conveyances. These were large sums for the time, and their successful investment in developing areas of New York City paid off handsomely. As the obituary of Joseph Meeks in the New York Herald, July 25, 1868, put it, "his faith in New York made him rich."⁸

After Joseph Meeks' death, the remaining members of his immediate family gave up their furniture business to devote themselves entirely to their real estate and other business interests. According to the directories, only Edward J. Meek (sic), probably a son of Joseph's original partner, continued with active cabinetmaking, and after 1879 he was listed simply as a maker of cases or boxes.⁹

Further important documentation has been brought to our attention by Margaret Brown Klapthor. Payments to the Meeks firm for furniture delivered to the White House (including those for chairs probably of the type of Figure 7) are recorded as follows in Records of Receipts and Expenditures of the U.S., General Treasury Account (National Archives): Account No. 96. 137, Voucher #45-J. & J.W. Meeks, 1846-October 26-12 BW(Black Walnut) Gothic.

	(dollars)
Chairs96.
12 boxes for do.4.
1847 Jan. 9 - 12 BW Gothic Chairs96.
12 boxes do.4.
	<u>200.</u> 10

One of the remaining "Lincoln Cabinet" side chairs in the White House is described by V. Craig, Museum Curator, National Park Service, as having upholstered seat and open back. Front legs flat with rounded fronts, shaped in reverse ogee curves without feet, rear legs canted in saber curve. The upholstered seat is rectangular with slightly bowed front. Upholstery material is attached to the upper part of flat plain seat rails. The open back is supported by cyma-curved side uprights and three similar curved center uprights. The center uprights are separated at the top by pointed arches cut into the top rail in the Gothic style. The top rail is flat and has three trefoils cut into it. The top of the rail curves slightly outward. The seat is upholstered in green velvet. The work was done in the White House in 1962.

The four Gothic Revival style side chairs in the White House Collection, although used as Lincoln's Cabinet chairs, were in the White House previous to that time. These remaining chairs are attributed to the New York cabinetmakers J. and J.W. Meeks and are dated about 1846. The attribution to J. and J.W. Meeks is on the basis of a payment to that firm for furniture for the White House including "Gothic chairs" on October 26, 1846, and on January 9, 1847.

Photographs and sketches of the Lincoln period show the chairs in use as Cabinet chairs (see the 1864 sketch of the Cabinet Room by C.K. Stellwagen which illustrates 12 of the chairs). Other chairs of the same form have been brought to the attention of the White House Curator previously and the Brooklyn Museum also has similar chairs.

The photograph of an advertisement in the July 1967 issue of the *ANTIQUES* magazine shows a side chair of Gothic Revival style bearing a pronounced design similarity, except for the forelegs, to the above-mentioned chairs of the White House Collection.

The latter side chairs are supported at front by modified cabriole forelegs while the side chair in the advertisement shows front legs terminating in a rearward scroll at top of rear edge. The rear shaping of the forelegs of the illustrated chair appears practically identical to that of a set of four labelled Gothic chairs made by A.&F. Roux in 1848. For further information, see an article in *Antiques Magazine*, February, 1968 entitled, "Alexander Roux and his Plain and Artistic Furniture," pp. 210-218.

FOOTNOTES

- 1/ Helen Comstock, American Furniture, p. 286.
- 2, 3/ John N. Pearce, Lorraine W. Pearce, and Robert C. Smith, "The Meeks family of cabinetmakers," edited by Alice Winchester, Antiques, LXXXV, No. 4 : 414, 415, April 1964.
- 4/ John Pearce and Lorraine W. Pearce, "More on the Meeks cabinetmakers," edited by Alice Winchester, Antiques, XC No. I : 69, July 1966.
- 5/ Comstock, op. cit., p. 286.
- 6/ Celia Jackson Otto, American Furniture of the Nineteenth Century, p. 94.
- 7/ Otto, p. 114.
- 8, 9/ John N. Pearce, Lorraine W. Pearce and Robert C. Smith, "The Meeks family of cabinetmakers," edited by Alice Winchester, Antiques, LXXXV No. 4 : 415, 417 April 1964.
- 10/ John Pearce and Lorraine W. Pearce, "More on the Meeks cabinetmakers," edited by Alice Winchester, Antiques, XC, No. I : 70, July 1966.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20560

June 4, 1973

Mr. Mark E. Neely, Jr.
Editor, Lincoln Lore
The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801

Dear Mr. Neely:

Enclosed you will find articles concerning our most recent accessions of objects associated with Abraham Lincoln complete with photographs which you may find appropriate for inclusion in Lincoln Lore. We are most fortunate in having such an outstanding Lincoln collection here in the Smithsonian Institution and I think the public should be made aware of it. As time permits, I shall try to write up some of the other Lincolniana in the national collections.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,



Herbert R. Collins
Associate Curator
Division of Political History

*Original copy and photo filed in
Collections - Smithsonian*

Lincoln Cabinet Chair (Accession 297603, donor: Elwood L. Middleton)

The Middleton accession came to the Smithsonian Institution in 1971 from the estate of Elwood L. Middleton, a descendent of Charles H. Middleton who lived on New Jersey Avenue in Washington, D.C. The Middletons were friends of both the Lincolns and the family of Benjamin B. French, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds in the District of Columbia, and a close friend of the Lincolns. The three families visited and there are written accounts of the Middletons entertaining at parties attended by both families.

The chair was originally one of the United States Senate chairs which was placed in the Capitol following the burning of Capitol by the British. Apparently through Benjamin French, Lincoln had acquired the chair for his use in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The chair appears in the painting of the Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation which now hangs in the United States Capitol. The engraving of this painting made by A.H. Ritchie clearly shows the chair with a slight alteration to the bottom of the front legs which occurred after Lincoln used the chair. The original sketch by Carpenter of Lincoln seated in the chair is now owned by Emerson Carpenter Ives. One will note by examining the painting that Lincoln's chair is unlike the rest of the set of chairs in the Cabinet Room at that time. Although the original leather on the chair as used in the Senate was red, the chair has been restored in a green which matches the color as it appears in Carpenter's original

painting which is the best evidence of how it looked when used by President Lincoln.

After the President's death the chair was acquired from the White House by Mr. Charles Middleton.



Williamson, State Treasurer; Hon. Joseph H. Freeman, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Hon. Jacob Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction; General Jasper N. Reece, Adjutant General of the State; Hon. B. D. Monroe, Assistant Attorney General of the State; Hon. Clinton L. Conkling; Hon. George N. Black; Col. Edward S. Johnson; Major Walter Robbins; Col. J. S. Culver, the rebuilder of the monument; Joseph P. Lindley; Mrs. Edward S. Johnson; Mrs. Alfred Bayliss; and a young son of the above named Joseph P. Lindley. Perhaps one or two others were present whose names are not now remembered.

Again the lead casket was sealed by Leon P. Hopkins and his assistant, Charles L. Willey, as it had been in 1871, and taken to the north room of the tomb. An excavation was made six feet from the north wall, twelve feet below the floor. The bottom of the pit was filled with two feet of concrete. Upon this was placed a steel cage. The coffin, rough box and all were then deposited within the steel frame and a steel cover was then riveted thereon. Liquid cement was next poured over the steel caged box filling all the vacant space and masonry was built to the top of the ground. Next, a few inches of soil was placed over it, leaving a four foot space between the concrete and the floor. So today, the body is enclosed in tons of iron, stone and cement ten feet below the floor and six feet south of the north inside wall. (See *Lincoln Lore*, Numbers 1502 (April, 1963) and 1503 (May, 1963) for story, "Postscript To The Life Magazine Article, 'What Happened To Lincoln's Body.'")

Editor's Note: It was not necessary to move Mr. Lincoln's body in the 1931 reconstruction of the Lincoln tomb.

The Gothic Chairs In Lincoln's Cabinet Room

Editor's Note: In my research for this short article, I wish to acknowledge the help of Bert Sheldon of Washington, D.C., who was successful in securing the assistance of Elmer S. Atkins, Assistant Director of White House Liaison, of the National Park Service. In the writing of this sketch, I relied heavily upon the Meeks invoice discovered by

Margaret Brown Klapthor, Assistant Curator of Political History in the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of History and Technology, and the research of Robert Marshall, Curator of the National Capital Parks, National Park Service of Washington, D.C.

R. G. M.

In the painting by Francis H. Carpenter (later engraved by A. H. Ritchie) entitled "The First Reading Of The Emancipation Proclamation Before The Cabinet," considerable emphasis was given by the artist to the chairs in the Lincoln cabinet room. The same emphasis has also been noted in various contemporary photographs and sketches of the Lincoln cabinet room, particularly an 1864 drawing by C. K. Stellwagon which illustrates all twelve of the cabinet chairs.

Many people have erroneously assumed that these Gothic Revival styled chairs, attributed to J. and J. W. Meeks, New York City cabinetmakers, were purchased during the Lincoln administration. The Meeks chairs have also been confused with the Gothic chairs made by A. & F. Roux in 1848. (See advertisement in July, 1967, issue of *Antiques Magazine*.) For further information, see an article in *Antiques Magazine*, February, 1968, entitled "Alexander Roux and his Plain and Artistic Furniture," pages 210-218.

The Meeks firm (1797-1868) delivered to the White House, during the James K. Polk administration, twelve black walnut Gothic chairs as recorded in the Records of Receipts and Expenditures of the United States, General Treasury Account (National Archives) (No. 96) 137, voucher No. 45, dated October 26, 1846 and January 9, 1847. This invoice was discovered by Margaret Brown Klapthor. The invoice follows:

	(dollars)
Chairs	96.
(Not the Lincoln cabinet chairs)	
12 boxes for do	4.
1847 Jan. 9 — 12 BW Gothic Chairs	96.
12 boxes do	4.

10

200.

One of the remaining "Lincoln Cabinet" side chairs in the White House has been described by V. Craig, Museum



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The Ritchie engraving of the Carpenter painting, "The First Reading Of The Emancipation Proclamation Before The Cabinet," reveals, in whole or in part, five of the black walnut Gothic Revival style chairs which were purchased by the government in 1847 and were utilized as cabinet chairs in the 1860's.



Photograph from the National Park Service, Washington, D.C.
Lincoln cabinet chair, one of four presently in the White House, attributed to J. and J. W. Meeks, New York City cabinetmakers. The seat was upholstered in green velvet in 1962. The chair is rather classical in line, but is embellished with such Gothic elements as trefoil cutouts in the crest rail and pointed arches in the back. This type of chair was frequently seen in America during the second quarter of the Nineteenth Century.

Curator, National Park Service, "as having upholstered seat and open back. Front legs flat with rounded fronts, shaped in reverse ogee curves without feet, rear legs canted in sabre curve. The upholstered seat is rectangular with slightly bowed front. Upholstery material is attached to the upper part of flat plain seat rails. The open back is supported by cyma-curved side uprights and three similar curved center uprights. The center uprights are separated at the top by pointed arches cut into the top rail in the Gothic style. The top rail is flat and has three trefoils cut into it. The top of the rail curves slightly outward."

We can conclude from the information compiled by Robert Marshall, Curator of the National Capital Parks Office, entitled "Joseph Meeks and Sons" that these chairs predate the Lincoln era and were used in the White House previous to that administration. Other similar chairs, of the same form and origin, have been brought to the attention of the White House Curator and the Brooklyn Museum also has identical chairs.

Connoisseurs of fine furniture are familiar with the firm of Joseph Meeks and Sons and articles concerning their work are to be found in *Antiques Magazine*, April, 1964, entitled "The Meeks Family of Cabinetmakers" and the July, 1966, issue entitled "More on the Meeks Cabinetmakers."

Was Lincoln A Rosicrucian?

Was Abraham Lincoln an adherent of a movement, dating back to the Seventeenth Century, that was devoted to esoteric wisdom? Was he a member of the *Order of the Rose* along with Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Brown and William Lloyd Garrison to name a few Americans claimed by the

Order? The Rosicrucians think Lincoln was not only a member of their Order, but that he held a seat in their World Council and that he played an important role as a member of the Council of Three.

In a three volume work entitled *The Book of Rosicruciae* by R. Swinburne Clymer, M. D., The Philosophical Publishing Company, "Beverly Hall", Quakertown, Pennsylvania, 1947, a biographical sketch of Abraham Lincoln appears in volume two, pages 173-174, in which the statement is made that he was a member of the Great, or World Council and the Council of Three of the Fraternitas and "co-worker, friend and associate of General (Ethan Allen) Hitchcock and (Paschal Beverly) Randolph." The informed reader of the biographical sketch is surprised to read that Lincoln was "born in Hardin County, Ky., February 12, 1800 (1809)."

In this three volume work, which is relatively free of documentary facts, the statement is made that, "Lincoln's Gettysburg Address has a place of honor in Oxford University, England, proclaimed by literary critics as the most perfect piece of literature ever written in the English language." This statement is, of course, erroneous and Oxford University has in times past issued a form letter to deny the statement.

Under the heading of "American Members Of The Councils Of Three And Seven — The Peerless Trio," a garbled statement is made that, "The three highest ranking members in the Western World (North America, Central America and South America, and the Isles of the sea), and who composed the *Council of Three* during the critical period of the pre-beginning formation of the American *Dome*, were first: John Temple, General Hitchcock and Dr. Randolph, the Supreme Grand Master, and later, when John Temple temporarily took the seat as Acting Supreme Grand Master in the absence of Dr. Randolph; General Hitchcock and Abraham Lincoln (seat of the Council in Washington). The Council continued active until the death of the President."

A further statement as to Lincoln's role as a Rosicrucian official follows: "President Lincoln possessed no directive, authoritative power, due to his public office, and was under the Law of Silence . . . Abraham Lincoln, General Hitchcock and Dr. Randolph were known as *The Peerless Trio*, or *Unshakable Triumvirate*."

To be sure, Major General Ethan Allen Hitchcock (1798-1870), a grandson of the leader of the Green Mountain Boys, was "an intimate of . . . Abraham Lincoln" and the many communications of Lincoln addressed to the general, who was commissioner for the exchange of prisoners, which appear in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* attest to their association. It is also known that Hitchcock wrote many literary works, "devoting himself to general literature and the peculiar philosophical investigations which had for years occupied his thoughts." The biographical sketch of Hitchcock appearing in Ezra J. Warner's book, *Generals In Blue*, is much more inclusive than the one which appears in *The Book Of Rosicruciae*, which deals with Hitchcock's preoccupation with the "perfection of Man" and his "Unity with Divine nature."

Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825-1875), Supreme Grand Master of the *Fraternitas Rosae Crucis*; Brotherhood, Order, Temple and Fraternity of the *Rosy Cross* and Hierarch of Imperial *Eulis* does not seem to appear within the focus of the Lincoln administration. There are no letters, no reminiscences, no authentic references connecting the lives of the two men.

How can historians be expected to believe that Abraham Lincoln was a Rosicrucian? There are no membership certificates, no statements by the President, no references in Lincolniana to the *Order of the Rose*, in fact, nothing of dates or documentary records, and even the biographical sketch of the President appearing in *The Book Of Rosicruciae* gives an incorrect birth date and is taken up with the folklore about Oxford University and the Gettysburg Address (most of the legends refer to the Bixby letter).

Lincoln was undoubtedly interested in the wisdom of the ages, but he was no joiner of a group which considered its members among the intellectual elite.

Treasures of late judge go on block Saturday

By MICHELE SHAFFER

Staff Writer

Stepping through the threshold of the late DeKalb Superior Court Judge Charles Quinn's home is like walking from 1989 to 1889.

The judge bought the Victorian home, on North Main Street in Auburn, in the late 1970s, had it perfectly restored and furnished it with antiques from the Victorian era, appropriate for a home built in the late 1880s.

Several large Oriental rugs lined the hardwood floors of the 14-room, 19th century home. And on Saturday, the rugs, along with the hundreds of antiques that decorated the restored Victorian home, will be sold at an auction on the lower level of the Scottish Rite Auditorium in Fort Wayne.

Quinn died Jan. 14 of a food-borne virus called shigellosis that he apparently caught after eating raw fish when he vacationed last fall in Morocco.

Kruse International, an Auburn-based auction company that specializes in collector automobiles, antiques and real estate, will call the auction, which begins at 9:30 a.m. at the auditorium at 431 W. Berry St.

Adults will pay a \$5 admission charge, and children will be admitted for \$3, but there will be no bidder's fees or buyer's premiums. All items will be sold to the highest bidder regardless of price.

Quinn focused on collecting antiques from four areas, said Dean Kruse, national sales manager of Kruse International and a close friend of Quinn's. Quinn collected items from the Civil War era with a concentration on Abraham Lincoln artifacts, Teddy Roosevelt memorabilia, Egyptian artifacts and Victorian antiques.

And most of the antiques will go on the auction block, said Quinn's mother, Goldie, who took a break from packing the original oil paintings, antique bedcovers and collectible dishes to give a quick tour through the home.

She said family members are keeping a few of the judge's things as keepsakes. A few other items are staying in the house because they seem to be a part of the house and will provide years of enjoyment to the young family who has bought the house, Goldie Quinn said.

"Teddy Roosevelt was one of his favorite people," Kruse said. "So I'd have to think that (the Teddy Roosevelt room) was his favorite room."

The entrance to the Teddy Roosevelt room is at the top of a short climb up a stairwell decorated on the south by a stained glass window.



These Abraham Lincoln antiques, including a chair used in the president's Cabinet room, are from the

late Judge Charles Quinn's home in Auburn. Quinn died in January from a food-borne virus.

A stuffed black bear cub is perched on a platform guarding the antique bed in the room, which is decorated with other stuffed animal heads, an appropriate reminder of the 26th president, who was an avid hunter. Goldie Quinn said the stuffed animals, like most of the other furnishings in the house, will be sold.

A leopard pelt, with the head still attached, found its place as a decoration atop the antique bed.

But one can't overlook the Lin-

coln collectibles.

"He was very proud of his Abraham Lincoln Cabinet chair," Kruse said, referring to the chair that sits under a framed etching of Lincoln.

Goldie Quinn has the history of the chair, which she said was used in Lincoln's Cabinet room.

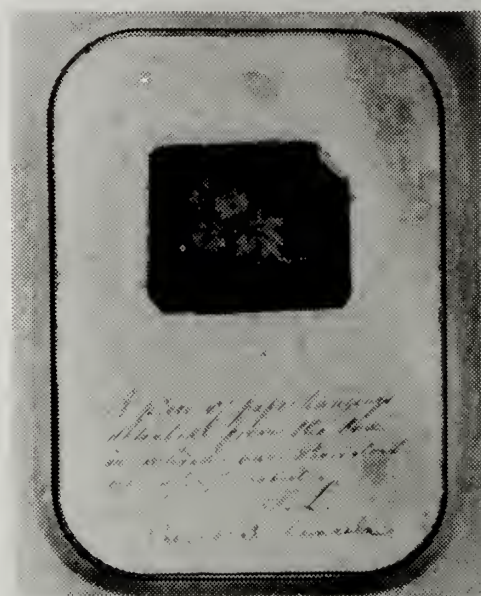
Perched on a night stand next to another antique bed in the Lincoln Room is a stovepipe top hat such as Lincoln wore, a bust of the former 16th president and a plaster death mask of Lincoln.

Some of the other items up for auction include a five-piece parlor suit with paw feet and a lion head finial settee, a solid walnut dining table with carved legs, two table leaves, two arm chairs and four side chairs.

Quinn's brother, David, said his brother had just had the dining room set recovered before he left on vacation last fall.

There also is a collection of political memorabilia, such as posters and photos.

LINCOLN MEMORABILIA



*One of two
known fragments
of wallpaper
from the Lincoln
Box in the
Ford Theatre
in Washington, D.C.*

*Joseph Meeks
supplied one dozen
side chairs of this
design for the
Lincoln Cabinet
room in the
White House.*

MICHAEL BERTOLINI

1157 SECOND AVE. (61st ST.) NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

PL 5-0225

ANTIQUES

INTERIORS



3158
ANTIQUES MAGAZINE

JULY 1967
"NOT LINCOLN'S CHAIR"

13

465

